

NEWS =

MOVIESTAR

Volume One: Betty Page The Queen of Curves™





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CALISTS. BAND LEADERS

The Pin-up King Meets the Queen of Curves

by Greg Theakston

Irving Klaw heard paper tearing, and it bothered him. As the owner of a second-hand bookstore, Klaw disliked the sound of his merchandise being damaged. He cauliously moved Left: Irving and Paula show off a batch of stills to the local kids. Below: Irving thanks his

through his basement level store toward the noise. Peering around one of the large book-cases, Irving made a discovery. The customer manhandling his books wasn't a man. It wasn't even a "he", it was a pubescent gift. Near her sat a pile of pictures tom from his second-hand movie



magazines. All were shots of Clark Gable, one of the top stars of 1936,

"Hey, what are you doing?" he asked. The girl's heart tried to leap from her chest. A trembled stammer gave way to a gush of tears and sobs. Even during the daytime, the back of the store was dimly lit. but the evening shadows couldn't hide the girl's shabby Irving softened. clothes. "Please, Mistah," she begged. "All I wanted was your old pictuhs a Clark Gable. Please. All the kids do it." Irving resigned himself to the loss, and said "Okav. beat it. The girl was running when she hit the cement steps to the street level. She greased through the crowds on 14th Street, and quickly disappeared.

Below: Dear Mr. Gable.



Irving inspected his stock and tound that the gift had been telling the truth; dozens of pictures has been cut with razor blades. More than that, the missing shots were of specific stars. Everybody had afavorite, and the Kate Hepburn fan always used a ruler to guide their cuttino. Very neat.

The store was empty again, and Inring returned to his perch hear the front door. He penered up at the windows, small and high. The view of the outside consisted mainly of a pedestrian parade of shoe-leather and shins. 14th Street was a major canal of traffic in the city, but the second-hand book trade was solow. It was a two-way river of lowing down his steps. Iving thought about the clipped magazines.

Irving Klaw was born in Brooklyn, N.Y. in 1911. The family was large, boasting three boys and three girls. One of his sisters, Paula, eventually went into business with Irving.

In 1939 they rented a basement store at 209 East 14th Street and they opened their used book business.

At the same time, Irving tounded a magic trick company, and called his endeavor The Nutrix Novelty Company. Paula handled the shipping of orders. Though it wasn't a large success, it taught Klaw some valuable lessons on how to run his own mail order business.

Right: Convicts liked Bogart.

Irving looked at his clipped movie fan magazines, then out the window and across the street. As movie palaces went. The Jefferson Theater was one of the best-- spotless interiors, first run features and a drill-team of ushers ready to help the patrons. People were lining up for the eight o'clock show, ready to worship the giants who played on the wall there. The Talkies were King. In front of the theater, black and white still photos acted like bait to lure customers. A thousand marquee bulbs lit his face in a warm glow. and Irving Klaw made a decision that would change his life; if movie star pictures were the only thing in his store that people wanted, he'd supply them.

The next day, Irving

obtained a stack of 8X10 movie stills from past releases. He was shocked at how fast the first pile went, and the buyers frequently requested more shots of their The small cardboard favorites. box quickly expanded into file cabinets full of alphabetized folders packed with photos. As word got out, walk-in business picked up. and Klaw began to show a nice profit.

By 1940 the still business had replaced the used books and Irving happily informed his landlord that he had outgrown his basement space, and was ready to move to the ground floor level of 209 East 14th Street. Klaw renamed his operation IRVING KLAW (PIN UP KING) PIN UP PHOTOS. The sign outside read, "Pin up photos of



movie scenes, bathing beauties, popular cowboy stars, vocalists and band leaders: Store hours were long: from 10:00 AM to 11:00 PM. Frequently out-of-towners would arrive about five minutes before closing time, keeping living there till midnight. The file cabinets reached to the caling and limed both walls, colling and limed both walls, the properties of the control of the colling and limed both walls, but have been seen the colling and limed both walls, but have been seen the colling and limed both was three feet wide. Stacks of photoswere everywhere and the slightest move set off an avalanche of pager.

The customers were a grab-bag of every type of film fan you can imagine. From sallors on leave looking for sallors on leave looking for pinups to high school girls looking for snaps of their idols. Once, an aged spinster arrived and requested a sill of Doug Fairbanks. Irving produced the file tolder and thought nothing more of it. Moments later the woman began to weep uncontrollably. "He's thereason looking the Below: Ein's Stanton, Circa 1954.





Above: Irving's Christmas party.

Some of the stars themselves appeared at the store, and Paula added their autographs to her growing collection. These were framed and posted on the walls. Eventually, the only open space was the ceiling and floor.

The new idea was such a hit that Irving decided to ofter his photos through the mail. He placed a few small advertisements in the backs of popular movie fan magazines, and the mail began to pour in from all parts of the world. Each new order was filled, and the names and addresses were added to his growing mailing list. By 1942 they were receiving an average of 300 orders per day. Paula packed all of the orders.

Irving knew that in order to sell photos, you had to show some pictures, and began producing bulletins to illustrate the merchandise. Usually four or eight pages in length, dozens

CARTOON and MODEL

97th EDITION PARADE 50 CENTS



BETTY PAGE ADJUSTING TEMPEST STORM'S CORSELETTE IN A SCENE FROM IRVING KLAW'S NEW COLOR MOVIE "TEASERAMA"

of new shots were reproduced postage stamp size, and were the strongest sellers. Naturally, the catalog was called MOVIE STAR NEWS, Journal of the Movie Still Collectors' Club, and featured scene stills and portraits of popular actors. The pin-up angle was covered in another publication. Regular bulletins were produced featuring all of Klaw's latest cheesecake material. Twice a vear, Irving would produce a 48 page version called, CARTOON AND MODEL PARADE, and it was the Sears and Roebuck of the Tease World More than that the bulletins and CARTOON MODEL PARADE identified the models in the Below: A typical M.S.N. ad.

shots. As a rule, men's magazines of the day generally didn't reveal the true names of the girls between the covers. Klaw's customers liked a particular girl, they could now ask for her by name

With the outbreak of World War Two Klaw's business skyrocketed. Soldiers and sailors made up one-third of his mail order business. Wartime favorites included Betty Grable. Lana Turner and Bita Hayworth. One such draftee wrote "At times, when the least doubt comes to my mind as to whether anything or anyone is worth fighting for, or perhaps dying for I have but to think of Lana. and all doubts vanish from my mind!"

PAGE DANCE MOVIE! "Joyful Dance by















212 E. 14 St., New York 3. N. Y



Special mail-order requests frequently fell into specific categories. Prisoners wanted action shots of Cagney, Bogart and Raft; small towners wanted Western stars on their horses, and sometimes just the horses; South Americans wanted blondes in bathing suits; old ladies requested Shirley Temple.

Never one to miss a bet, Klaw also created a photo reproduction service. Newspapers and magazines would contact Movie Star News and request specific material that Klaw would provide. The cost for this was a dollar or more, depending on the amount of research involved. The average customer paid less. Action stills went for the next seat, and a quarter for portraits and cheesecake.

The cheesecake divison was one of Klaw's mostpopular. Cuties with curves were some of his strongest sellers, and he stocked them all.

Some collectors demanded the "specialized" photos Klaw could find: spanking scenes and bound beauties. Movie Star News was the only place in America that legally sold this type of material, and the fans went wild for it. Some collectors even subscribed to these series. and whenever a new entry arrived, it was shipped automatically. The only problem was that Hollywood didn't shoot these scenes often enough for Irving's taste. Around 1948, he



Above: Irving and the girls.

was lamenting the fact bone of his regular cushmers, an area lawyer known as "Little John". "Why not make your own photos," Johnsuggested, Irving thought about it and agreed that its ounded like agood idea. John would pay the expenses, the shoets would be arranged by the Klaws, and Move Star News would have the rights to sell Below. Early bondage shots looked like crien photos.



copies. The first experiments with bondage photos resulted in pics that look like they'd have been at home in any detective magazine. The models were usually dressed, playing out some imaginery scenerio that resulted in the binding of an attractive lady. John Wille, erroite artist/photographers, with the properties of the properties o

C.&M.P. also offered original comic strips serialized in from twenty to thirty 8x10 stills. Klaw commissioned custom-created comic strips that dealt with bondage themes. The

Below: Eric Stanton produced dozens of drawings like this. work was drawn by Gene Bilbrew, Eric Stanton and John Willie. No matter what the story, the reader could always count on the "Damsel In Distress" throughout.

Bondage wasn'tthe only thing Klaw was producing. Known as 'The Pin Up King', he was living up to his reputation with custom-made shots. Many of the girls who were posing for his bondage and spanking shots were also posing in more glamorous situations. The photo session are suitations. The production of the production

The women used in these sessions were usually New York area strippers or cheesecake models. Many of





Above: Irving Klaw cuddles with his good luck charm.

them had gained exposure through Robert Harrison's line of girlie mags, WINK, FLIRT, TITTER and BEAUTY PARADE, and Klaw used most of them in his operation. Lili Dawn was Klaw's first commercial bondage model. Other models included Robin Adayre and Francis Adams. The first shots appear in the 4000 series. his first bondage catagory. Advertisements were placed in Harrison's line of books, and business took off.

The photos were usually packaged in sets of eight 4X5 photos for \$2.00, or 40¢ each. High Heel and pin-up shots sold for 15¢ and 25¢ each. Thousands of variations were available over the counter or through the mail.

Having outgrown their second store, the Klaws decided to move up once again, literally. The next stop was just across the street at 212 E. 14 th., on the second floor. They didn't need to look out the basement window to see the marquee on the Jefferson Theater. Now it was next door, and the only guy who passed their window was the guy who changed the titles on the sign. The new space was about twelve feet wide and twenty feet long, but soon it looked as cramped as the old place. Paula's husband. Jack Kramer, also signed aboard about that time.

When Little John died in a tragic accident, the Klaws decided to continue to produce their specialty photos. Paula was put in charge of the production, and immediately rented the third floor, just above the store. Four sections were





divided, and each had a different look. Furniture included a couple of overstuffed chairs, a day bed, tables, and a record player.

Paula had always been on hand during the early photo sessions. She would assist the hired cameraman during the shoot and always tied the girls. "There was nothing fake about those knots," Paula remembers, "When I tied them, they were really tied snug." Paula's presence as a chaperone also allowed the models to relax during the shoots. Eventually, Paula took over as the chief photographer as well. Shooting with a Speedgraphic 4X5 camera and a 16mm Bloex movie camera, she shot some of America's most glamorous habes.

Greenwood.

"Lots of the fans would write in with their suggestions, and if the idea was good, we'd try it out. I really listened to what those people suggested. It was a good barometer of what the general audience wanted."

very other Saturday attension, and usually lasted for six hours. During that time Paula snapped around 300 still shots, and one 16mm film, 200 feet long. In 1953 they even began to experiment with full color 3-0 shots. The girls were paid \$50 each, per session, and were frequently treated to dinner.

In 1952, his good luck charm walked through the door and announced that her name was Bettie Page.

Born on April 22, 1923. Bettie grew up in Nashville. Tennessee. She attended Hume-Fogg High School, and graduated in 1940. She got her degree in teaching, but gave it up after a semester. In 1944 she turned up in Hollywood, trying to break into films. She signed with a major studio, did a screen test and posed for publicity photos Disenchanted she moved to San Francisco where she met her first husband. They settled in Pittsburgh, Pa. where the marriage failed. Her final stop was New York City.

At twenty-five years of age, Ms. Page was determined to make a success of herself. Her real aim was to act on the Broadway stage, but she took on modeling assignments to pay the bills. Early appearances in Robert Harrison's line of books were Bettle's first cheescake shoots. She mugged and hammed it up in two-page mini-burlesque layouts, and played it sultry in the pin up shots. She was an immediate smash with the readers, and was gaining a good reputation.

One of Harrison's photographers brought Betty to Irving Klaw's attention. He was always on the lookout for new talent, and Betty Page seemed to have potential. A shoot was arranged and the Klaws were impressed. So much so that they debuted her on the cover of





Above and Below: Betty at the peak of her beauty.

CARTOON AND MODEL PARADE #33 (1952). It happened so fast that no shots of her are offered inside. Her name is misspelled "Betty" on the credit line, and Irving would continue to use this version. In fact, people probably think that's the true spelling of her name.

Shortly after, ninety new shots with models Erma Williams, June King, Dorene Posner and Betty were offered as set R-700-789. It was a big him, and Irving knew he was on to something.

The more they worked together, the better the result. In a short amount of time, Betty developed her style. Hundreds of shots were taken at each esssion, and almost every one was printed in mass quantities. This left little room for error, and

Betty learned to give it her best effort every time. It was hard to take a bad shot of Betty.

The Fall of 1954 saw the production of Klaw first feature length motion picture MUSICAL VARIETRASE. His film company, BEAUTIFUL PRODUCTIONS, shorthis burlesque revue on 35mm stock, and hired evotic dancer, Lili SLCyr, to headline. The film was a success and TEASFAMM, a companion film, was released in early 1955. Berly Page did a carly 1955. Berly Page do a changing the title cards for the acts.

By 1956, Betty was Oueen of the Pin Ups. Her fame was international, and she was the object of fantasy to millional At the height of her fame, Betty walked away from it all. By 1957 she'd left New York, and closed a chapter in the Movie Star News Story.



Since that time, MSN has continued to supply Page cultists with classic 4X5 reproductions from the 1950s. 8mm has given way to video tape, and these kooch-loops are Paula still runs the store, and can usually be found surrounded byscores of autographed photos

of the stars she's met over the years. In 1982 M.S.N. moved to a new store at 134 W. 18. The aisles there are big enough to drive a small car through and they have enough space at last.









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BP 73 BP 74 BP 75 BP 85 BP 87 BP 77 BP 90 BP 76 BP 78 BP 89 BP 92 BP 93 BP 79 BP 83 BP 82 BP 84 BP 96

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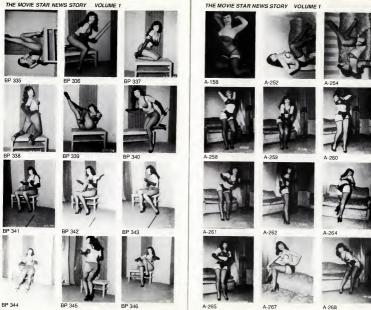
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